

McNamara Says

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Critics Distort Truth

Calls House Unit Report Unfounded

Denies He's Alone
In His Decisions
Involving Bombers

By John G. Norris
Washington Post Staff Writer

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara charged yesterday that congressional critics of his manned bomber policy had painted a "shockingly distorted picture of the true situation."

Accompanied by top Pentagon aides he went before a televised news conference to refute accusations that he stood alone among Defense leaders in opposing a replacement for the B-52 and in ordering the scrapping of the B-58.

A House Armed Services subcommittee headed by Rep. F. Edward Hebert (D-La.) presented a highly critical report Sunday which called for reversal of McNamara's decisions and new legislation requiring congressional "advice" on major weapons decisions.

Tells of Disagreement

McNamara declared there

was disagreement within the Pentagon as to the characteristics and role of a possible new bomber and he was not going to approve additional funds for its development until this was resolved.

The Pentagon chief repeated his view that he saw, "no clear need" for a new heavy bomber, but had allowed \$11 million in the new budget for research in this field so as to be better prepared to develop such a weapon later "in the unlikely circumstances" that such a need develops.

With McNamara at his hastily called news conference were Deputy Secretary Cyrus R. Vance, Air Force Secretary Harold Brown and Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Claims Support of Chiefs

The Joint Chiefs of Staff, McNamara declared, were unanimously in support of his position on all of the bomber issues except one. They recommended \$23 million for development work on a new heavy bomber, instead of the \$11 million he authorized.

Gen. John P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, wanted the additional funds to start "full development" of such a weapon, he said, but the other chiefs urged that it be used for further bomber research and did not recommend a go-ahead signal for a new bomber.

The suggestion by the Hebert subcommittee that "major decisions on the manned bomber program were made against the advice of the Joint Chiefs

of Staff is without any foundation whatever," McNamara declared.

Scrapping Decision Upheld

He went on to say that the Joint Chiefs agreed with his decision to scrap 345 early B-52C through B-52M models and to introduce the FB-111 formerly known as the TFX as a follow-on bomber. And the Chiefs, he added, did not "oppose the decision" to scrap the B-58 by 1971.

The Joint Chiefs reviewed the B-58 decision and "withheld any judgment" because there is further time to reconsider the matter, the Secretary said. And finally, McNamara declared, the Chiefs did not recommend full development, production or deployment of a large new bomber, because of differences of view as to its character and role.

Members of the House subcommittee stuck by their report. Rep. Porter Hardy (D-Va.) said it was an "accurate portrayal of the information presented", and Rep. William Bray (R-Ind.) said McNamara's "own words" were followed in making their recommendations.

Congressmen noted that the Hebert report never declared that there was any Pentagon or subcommittee opposition to scrapping the early B-52s and substituting the FB-111. They also said they had reported only that no one had "recommended or truly supported" McNamara's decision on the B-58.

Opinions Still Differ

As for suggestions that

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everyone except McNamara favored a replacement for the B-52 in the 1970s, the Secretary had considerable grounds for complaint. While Air Force officials, including Secretary Brown testified they favored a new bomber, no other members of the JCS, except McConnell, were called by the subcommittee. However, John S. Foster, Jr., director of defense research and engineering, testified he knew no one who agreed with McNamara in opposing a new bomber.

Brown said yesterday that there still was considerable

difference of opinion in the Pentagon over whether a new bomber should be designed for nuclear attacks, conventional missions, or both. McNamara said some people also felt the FB-111 could be further modified for a full strategic role, or that the C-5 transport could be altered into a bomber.

McNamara said long-range missiles will be the backbone of the American deterrent force. The Hebert group warned the United States would be open to attack if Russia built an effective missile defense and we had no bombers.

The Secretary indicated that Russia had started to build a missile defense, but declared there is "no system on the horizon which could in any way" stop American missiles getting through to their targets. If the Soviets spend heavily on a missile defense, he said, they will be as much in error as they were in their big investment in anti-aircraft defense.